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Vincenzo Paolo Traversa, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Passed Away August 12, 2019



Vincenzo Paolo Traversa, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, began his career at CSU, Hayward (East Bay) in the fall of 1970 and retired in 2005, at which time he entered the Faculty Early Retirement Program, completing the program in 2010.

Dr. Traversa passed away peacefully on Monday, August 12, 2019. He was born in Venice, Italy in 1923 to Francesco and Caterina Traversa. In 1949 he earned the *dottore in lingue* from the Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples, Italy. From 1950 to 1957 he taught Italian language at the NATO headquarters in Naples. In 1957 he came to the United States to marry and attend the University of California, Los Angeles, where he earned his master's and doctoral degrees in Romance Languages and Literatures.

Dr. Traversa was a Professor of Italian in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and was the director of the Humanities Program in the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences for many years. In 1970 he was hired as Professor and Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, as it was called then. He served as Chair of the Department for thirteen years. He taught an array of courses, not only for the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, but also for the Department of English, for the Women's Studies Program, and for the Humanities Program. These courses, most of which he created, included Italian language, literature and culture at all levels, elementary and intermediate Latin, Dante's *Divine Comedy*,

the era of Petrarch and Boccaccio, the Humanities series I-II-III, Literature of the Holocaust, The Problem of Evil and the Holocaust, Adultery and Literature, and Women of the Classics. He also taught for several years on language teaching methodology for the Department of Teacher Education.

Dr. Traversa published extensively, both in the field of language methodology and literature. His most notable publications include the three editions of the successful first-year Italian language textbook, *Parola e Pensiero: Introduzione alla Lingua Italiana Moderna*, and the second-year Italian language textbook, *Idioma in Prospettiva: Profili da Il Gattopardo*. He is also the author of *Luigi Capuana, Critic and Novelist*, *Racconti di Alberto Moravia*, and *Frequency Dictionary of Italian Words* (co-author). His most recent books are *The Laude in the Middle Ages* (1994), an edition, translation and analysis of a fourteenth century Italian manuscript containing a number of *laude* (religious praises in verse) composed in the general area of Arezzo and Cortona (Central Italy); *Giovanni Boccaccio, Theseid of the Nuptials of Emilia (Teseida delle nozze di Emilia)* (2002), that introduces the translation of an edited medieval text of the first Italian epic poem with an introduction and critical analyses; *Three Italian Epistolary Novels, Foscolo, De Meis, Piovene. Translations, Introductions, and Backgrounds* (2005), works, for the first time in a single study, that reflect social, historical, and stylistic aspects through 150 years of Italian literature; *Natalino Sapegno. A Literary History of the Fourteenth Century. Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio. A Study of Their Times and Works (Storia Letteraria del Trecento)* (2016), the translation of the great work of Natalino Sapegno, which studies the literary development of the golden century of early Italian literature; and *The Theme of the Plague in Italian Letters* (2018), the study of several poetic and prose compositions in early Italian literature that contain references to the bubonic plague and other illnesses that were used in the language both literally and metaphorically.

For many years Dr. Traversa presented live, weekly editorials on the Italian-language television program *Re di Cuori*, in San Francisco, which he co-hosted in collaboration with RAI-TV, Italian National Radio and Television. In 1986 he was awarded the title, *Cavaliere nell'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana* (Cross of Knight of the Order of Merit), in recognition of long-standing service and achievements in the academic world and in the broader community. He was also honored in the 2000 edition of *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*.

In 2006, Dr. Traversa was honored by the faculty with the Sue Schaefer Faculty Service Award. Here are the words of his colleagues who made the formal nomination (February 24, 2006), Professor Emerita Julia Norton of the Department of Statistics and Biostatistics and Professor David Larson, Chair of the Department of Anthropology, Geography and Environmental Studies:

When the call went out for nominations for the 2006 Sue Schaefer Faculty Service Award, numerous colleagues across the University reacted as we did: By expressing a desire to nominate Professor Emeritus Vincenzo Traversa of Modern Languages and Literatures. We all feel it is time to recognize his extraordinary service to the faculty. Listed below is only his most recent (since 1999-2000) service.

Chair, *Professional Leave Committee* 99-00, 00-01, 01-02, 02-03, 03-04, 04-05

Chair, *Faculty Affairs Committee* 99-00, 00-01, 03-04, 04-05; *FAC member* 02-03, 05-06

Member, *Academic Senate* 99-00, 00-01, 03-04, 04-05
Director, *Humanities Program* 99-00, 00-01, 01-02, 02-03, 03-04, 04-05, 05-06
Member, *Center for Jewish Studies* 99-00, 00-01, 01-02, 02-03, 03-04, 04-05, 05-06
Member, *Promotion, Tenure & Retention Committee*, Dept. of English 99-00
Member, *Promotion, Tenure & Retention Committee*, Dept. of Geog. & ES 00-01
Chair, *University Promotion & Tenure Committee* 01-02, 03-04
Member, *Promotion, Tenure & Retention Committee*, Dept. of MLL 02-03; Chair 04-05, 05-06
Member, *Department Committee for Evaluation of Tenured Faculty* 02-03, 04-05
Chair, *Lecturer Range Elevation Subcommittee* 03-04, 04-05
Member, *Search Committee for Tenure Track Position in Spanish* 04-05

The previous 29 years, as rich in contributions as the past seven, included a 13-year Run (1970-1983) as Department Chair during what may have been the “golden age” of foreign languages on this campus. All told, according to Iliana Holbrook, Chair of Modern Languages and Literatures, Professor Traversa has served more than **70 terms** on major university, college and department committees. In short, he has held more important posts, and held them more often and with distinction than anyone we know.

A dozen faculty members* supported his nomination by way of recollections of Professor Traversa’s contributions to faculty governance. Space limitations allow us to share remarks from only a few of them. Joy Bhadury, Chair of Management and Finance, recognizing how Professor Traversa has disported himself with fairness, grace and finesse, writes “...[I] have always been impressed by the dedication and spirit with which he provided his service...Always a champion of faculty governance but never ostentatiously aggressive and itching for a fight with [the] administration...” Professor Emeritus Gerald Henig of History, who has known Vincenzo for over 35 years, calls Professor Traversa a “dedicated teacher and an outstanding scholar [who] has always remained committed to the welfare of the university, its students, its faculty, and its staff.” And finally there is this from Bruce Trumbo of Statistics: “Vincenzo has served often on the [University Promotion & Tenure Committee], where he has kept track of ways in which the PT&R document needs to be changed to improve the functionality, clarity, and fairness of the process, and lobbied for these changes on FAC. All of those who serve on PTR committees and all who are evaluated by them owe him a debt of gratitude greater than they can know.”

Based on his 36-year record of sustained contributions to our faculty, it seems reasonable to suggest that had not Sue Schaefer preceded him into retirement, we might be referring to this honor as the Vincenzo Traversa Faculty Service Award! The time has come to officially honor Professor Traversa for his extraordinary dedication to faculty governance and for his fierce and honest defense of faculty rights.

*Jagdish Agrawal, Dee Andrews, Joy Bhadury, Gerald Henig, Iliana Holbrook, David Larson, John Lovell, David Nickles, Julia Norton, Scott Stine, David Stronck, Bruce Trumbo

Here is the interview with Dr. Traversa after he received the Sue Schaefer Faculty Service Award:
<https://www.csueastbay.edu/news/category-pages/archive/archive-pre-2009/the-view/top-stories/article-40.html>

Dr. Traversa is survived by his wife, Gina, brother-in-law Patrick Ratto, and brother Paolo Traversa and family in Italy.

Gifts in memory of Dr. Vincenzo Traversa can be made at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation. Gifts can be made online at www.sutterhealth.org/pamf-giving or by calling Connie Handlin at 510/495-5795. Gifts can also be mailed to: Palo Alto Medical Foundation, Attn: Philanthropy, 795 El Camino Real, Palo Alto, CA 94301. Please make sure to indicate your gift is in memory of Dr. Vincenzo Traversa to support the Palo Alto Fund for Excellence.